



South Carolina Department of
**CHILDREN'S
ADVOCACY**
Advocacy. Accountability. Service.

MONTHLY UPDATE

Department of Children's Advocacy Monthly Update
Connecting with and updating our community

A Message from the State Child Advocate

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and includes Children's Advocacy Centers Day and Volunteer Week. During this month, we received the Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children 2021 Data Reference Book which includes data that suicide has risen to the #1 position as the leading cause of death in two age groups.

During April, we shared the mission, vision and work of the Children's Advocacy with hundreds of people through training presentations, interviews, social media, and interagency meetings. These are events that are highlighted in our April 2021 monthly newsletter. Please contact me if you would like more information about the important work that is underway at the Department of Children's Advocacy.



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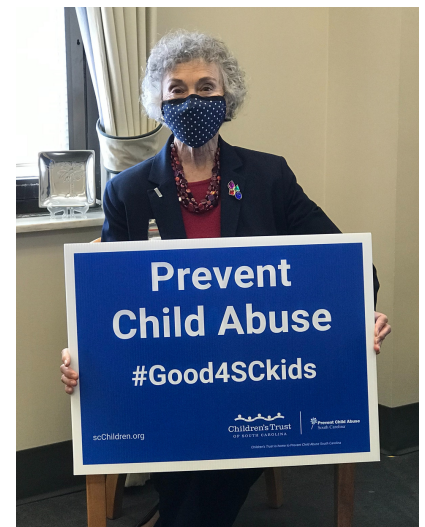
UPCOMING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Child Abuse Prevention Month

On Tuesday afternoon, April 6, 2021, Governor Henry McMaster and First Lady Peggy McMaster attended a press conference during which Governor McMaster presented his proclamation of April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Other speakers at the event were, as pictured from left to right, Lieutenant Governor Pamela Evette, State Child Advocate and Department of Children's Advocacy Director Amanda Whittle, Children's Trust CEO Sue Williams, and Department of Social Services Mike Leach.

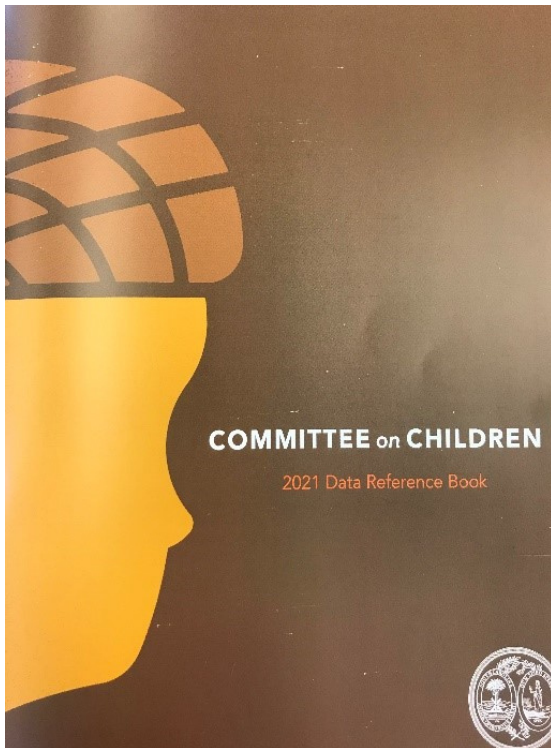


On Monday evening, April 5, DSS Communications and External Affairs Director Connelly-Anne Ragley, Department of Children's Advocacy Director Amanda Whittle, and Children's Trust CEO Sue Williams participated in interviews with WSPA News Channel 7 (Greenville, SC) to discuss the increase in reports of abuse and neglect and child abuse prevention efforts. WSPA's full news segment can be viewed [here](#).



Department of Children's Advocacy state office recognized Child Abuse Prevention Month 2021.

Suicide is #1 Cause of Death for Children Ages 10 TO 17



During a meeting of the Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children this month, Dr. Liyun Zhang, Research Scientist with the Children's Law Center, provided an informational briefing regarding the Children's Committee's 2021 Data Reference Book. The 2021 data book includes data regarding safety, child welfare, health, juvenile justice and education indicators. JCLCC Chair Representative Beth Bernstein and Vice-Chair Senator Brad Hutto noted, "Each year the Data Reference Book evolves to inform child serving professionals in their efforts to keep children safe, healthy, educated, responsible and supported. The data contained herein indicates that the children of our state face challenges and barriers to becoming successful citizens of our state, and the global health pandemic has made many measures worse. We urge you to put this information to good use as you consider the implications of the data and contemplate policy recommendations for future study and action."

In the 2021 Data Reference Book, suicide has risen to the #1 position as the leading cause of death for children in both the 10-14 and 15-17 age groups.

Suicide was previously the #2 cause of death for children between the ages of 15 and 17 and #1 cause of death for children between the ages of 10 and 14, and suicide is now the #1 leading cause of deaths for those two age groups. The overall child death rate for children from birth to age 17 is 59.1 per 100,000 population which is higher than the national rate of 47.4 per 100,000 population. The complete Data Reference Book can be viewed on the Children's Committee's website at <http://www.sc.edu/jclcc>.

S.C. CHILD DEATH CAUSES BY AGE (2019)

< 1 year	1-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-17 years
Conditions originating in the perinatal period (n= 205)	Motor vehicle accidents (n=10)	Motor vehicle accidents (n=9)	Suicide (n=14)	Suicide (n=25)
Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities (n=63)	Homicide (n=10)	Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities (n=5)	Motor vehicle accidents (n=10)	Motor vehicle accidents (n=23)
Influenza and pneumonia (n=7)	Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities (n=8)	Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities (n=5)	Cancer (n=7)	Homicide (n=15)
Homicide (n=5)	Accidental drowning and submersion (n=7)	Homicide (n=5)	Homicide (n=5)	
	Influenza and pneumonia (n=6)			
	Cancer (n=5)			
Causes above (n=280)	Causes above (n=46)	Causes above (n=19)	Causes above (n=36)	Causes above (n=63)
accounted for 72% of deaths for this age group	accounted for 58% of deaths for this age group	accounted for 53% of deaths for this age group	accounted for 60% of deaths for this age group	accounted for 70% of deaths for this age group

Note. Deaths ≥5 were included.

S.C. Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children (Committee on Children), 2021 Data Reference Book, p.1, <http://www.sc.edu/jclcc>

Highlights of the Department of Mental Health's Suicide Prevention

The Department of Mental Health's Office of Suicide Prevention is providing training to state agencies, communities and faith leaders. All Department of Children's Advocacy (DCA) staff have completed the online suicide prevention training made possible through DMH's OSP. Visit <https://hope.connectsyou.org/> to submit a questionnaire today. Learn more about the work of DMH's Office of Suicide Prevention here: <http://osp.scdmh.org/>.

Did you know that SCDMH's Mobile Crisis Program is available statewide, all day, everyday? Call the Crisis Hotline at 1-833-364-2274 for crisis response.



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255

Whether you are personally in crisis or you are concerned about someone who is, you can ALWAYS call 1-800-273-TALK and get a listening ear, resources, and support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This hotline does not close on the weekend, holidays, or during bad weather.

En español oprima el 2.
For hearing & speech impaired with TTY equipment 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

SC Dept of Mental Health Mobile Crisis Program

What we do...

Our team of crisis clinicians provide adult and children with clinical screening in person at the location of the crisis, at the community mental health center, over the phone and via Telehealth Communication Software.

Our goal is to de-escalate the crisis and provide individuals and families with ongoing mental health treatment and other helpful resources.

Crisis Hotline
833-364-2274

South Carolina Department of Mental Health

Why we do it...

To provide patients throughout South Carolina with immediate access to crisis services and the most appropriate level of care. As a diversionary program, we strive to divert individuals from unnecessary hospitalizations and incarcerations, develop plans of safety and assist individuals in crisis with continued mental health care.

Our fully qualified, masters level clinicians work directly with local mental health centers, law enforcement, Probate, and community providers to deliver solution-focused interventions and stabilization to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.

"To support the recovery of people with mental illnesses."

REGION A: Midlands

REGION B: Upstate

REGION C: Pee-Dee

REGION D: Coastal

We provide adults and children with clinical screening:

- In Person at the location Of the crisis**
- In person at a CMHC clinic**
- Via phone**
- Via Telehealth communication software**

In partnership with SC Dept. of Health and Human Services

South Carolina is preparing to launch 988. On July 16, 2020, the FCC adopted rules to establish 988 as the new, nationwide, easy-to-remember 3-digit phone number for Americans in crisis to connect with suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors. Beginning July 16, 2022, dialing "988" will route calls to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

For Veterans Suicide Prevention Lifeline, call 1-800-273-8255 then Press 1; for Espanol, call 1-888-628-9454; for The Trevor Project, call 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678678; for SCDMH's Deaf Services Hotline, VP 803-339-3339 or email deafhotline@scdmh.org. For the Crisis Text Line, text HOPE4SC to 741741.

Highlights of Suicide Prevention Legislation

S. 231 and H. 3476 recognize the need to put a valuable suicide prevention resource in the hands of young people. Regarding S. 231, Director Whittle shared with the Senate Education subcommittee earlier this month, “It can be difficult for people who are having thoughts of suicide to speak with people they know, and it is difficult for people to know how to respond when someone brings up the issue of suicide. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline has trained individuals who are available to answer calls from people who are in crisis. Having this number on 7th through 12th graders’ badges is a simple way to provide a life-saving resource.”



Student ID Card Suicide Prevention Act
— S 231 + H 3476 Committee Endorsed —

This Act **requires** public schools and public and private institutions of higher learning to **add the phone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** to student identification cards.

Why do we need this Act?
Suicide rates are going up for those ages 10-24!

In fact...
1 in 11 high school students attempt suicide in SC.

But, calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is effective in reducing emotional distress and suicidality, so...

And, suicide is the leading cause of death for South Carolina children aged 11-14 and 15-17.

Suicide is preventable!

If you or a loved one need help, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255**

COMMITTEE on CHILDREN

Children’s Advocacy Centers Day

Children’s Advocacy Centers Day was recognized on April 7, 2021. Speakers at the event’s press conference were, as pictured left to right, Amanda Whittle (State Child Advocate and Department of Children’s Advocacy Director); Shauna Galloway-Williams (Executive Director of the Julie Valentine Center); Tom Knapp (Executive Director of the S.C. Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers); Attorney General Alan Wilson; Kim Hamm (former Executive Director of the S.C. Network of



Children’s Advocacy Centers and current Deputy Director of the Attorney General Office’s Crime Victims Services); and Sue Williams (CEO of Children’s Trust of South Carolina). Ms. Valentine accepted an award on behalf of Silent Tears (a charitable organization aimed at providing resources for survivors of sexual abuse). Ms. Hamm was awarded the BeHeard4Kids State Leadership Award. Children’s Advocacy Centers were legislated to reduce trauma to children by creating a child-friendly setting to provide services and to create a coordinated and trauma-informed response to child abuse.

Volunteer Week

Governor Henry McMaster proclaimed the week of April 18-24, 2021 as Volunteer Week. A proclamation for Volunteer Week recognizes the value volunteer service provides to our state.

The S.C. Dept. of Children's Advocacy particularly recognizes the work of approximately 200 volunteers who serve as local legislatively-appointed board members or state gubernatorial-appointed board members through the Foster Care Review Board, approximately 1800 volunteers who serve as court-appointed special advocates with the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program, and the volunteers who participate in photo shoots or photo exhibits in coordination with the S.C. Heart Gallery. These volunteers use their time, skills and compassion to advocate for abused and neglected children in our state, and we are grateful for them!



Volunteer Appreciation Week Feature: Meet the Flannerys

The Flannerys are an example of volunteers who “set a high standard for making a difference in people’s lives and in their communities.” They are trained volunteers with the Guardian ad Litem Program who participated in one of the four Joint Collaboration and Training sessions that were held over the past few weeks with Foster Care Review Board, Guardian ad Litem Program and DSS. Meet Jim and Elaine Flannery!



What first made you interested/inspired to become a volunteer GAL? They shared that they have a friend who lives a couple blocks from them, in their Pawley’s Island community, who serves as a GAL. Their friend told them about the program and invited them to a GAL volunteer recruitment open house in their community. DSS workers and GAL team members shared great information about the program and answered questions. Both Elaine and Jim being NY natives who worked with children in their career and former volunteer work, shared that while at the event, “we found it very interesting and immediately we were in!”

How has volunteering impacted or changed you/affected your life? Elaine: “Number one, it’s very rewarding!” She shared that one of her last teaching assignments in NY before retiring was in a community where the children faced great challenges (many living with relatives due to their parents experiencing drug addiction, substance abuse, incarceration, etc.). Elaine connected with and sympathized with the children. She looked forward to retirement but missed contact with the children. “This avenue seemed great to meet my desire to serve children.”

Jim: “I have been blessed to have such a great and close family, but many don’t have that. So I felt this opportunity could help me bring a little sunlight into their lives.” Jim shared that even though he was excited to serve the children, this experience has “paid dividends in my life” and shared that “anything we can do to improve their lot in life means a great deal to me.”

How would you share with and encourage a fellow resident to serve as a volunteer GAL? “It’s a sense of satisfaction that you were able to help the family improve and be reunified, be placed in good care (foster or kinship care), or adopted. I love to see how happy the children are to see their lives normalize,” shared Elaine. “I speak to many people who have so many reasons they can’t volunteer. But, you just need a little bit of empathy, just be human and give them a helping hand,” shared Jim.

Please share the most memorable/impactful story of how you were able to assist/affect change with a child or family. Jim and Elaine shared that the last two children they served were “the most trying and most rewarding”. They worked hard with a brother and sister duo with a challenging and complex case for more than two years (their longest case); but, they worked very closely with and accomplished a lot with these children. They began in kinship care (with an aunt), then foster care (split/not together, which was a hardship), reunited with one foster family, received the services and therapy they needed - and then saw these children find a forever home, happiness and a positive outlook on a bright future. This was truly an experience Jim and Elaine said was very rewarding and memorable.

Upcoming Learning Opportunities:

4th Annual South Carolina Infant Mental Health Association (SCIMHA) Conference Features Segments Regarding Safe Babies Courts

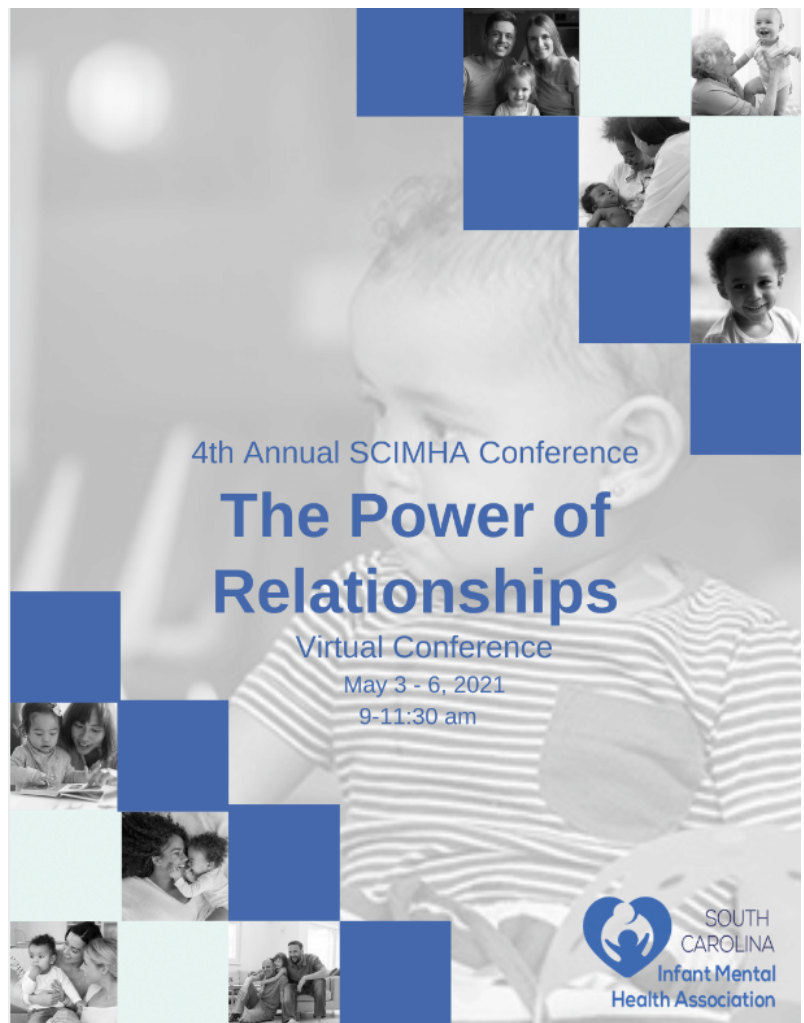


The Department of Children's Advocacy will be participating in SCIMHA'S 4th Annual Conference, and interested individuals are encouraged to join. The conference will be a virtual event which will be held May 3 through May 6, 2021 from 9 until 11:30 a.m. each day. The conference will feature segments on Safe Babies Courts which are currently being piloted in Richland, Laurens and Spartanburg counties, and there is an intention to expand Safe Babies Courts throughout the state.

In August of 2020, South Carolina was chosen by Zero to Three for a \$425,000 grant to start Infant Toddler Courts (Safe Baby Courts) in three South Carolina counties.

Implementation of Safe Babies Courts in other states has reduced the number of contested hearings and continuances (because cases are resolved prior to court), strengthened families by reducing re-entry to the child welfare system, and ultimately reduced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) endured by children. Spartanburg, Laurens and Richland counties were selected as sites for this grant based upon the availability and readiness of community partners, including legal and judiciary partners, with a commitment to innovative solutions to improve child welfare and court processes. We are grateful for the opportunity to bring more resources to our state for strengthening families and

communities. Learn more about Infant-Toddler (Safe Baby) Courts here: <https://www.zerotothree.org/our-work/the-national-infant-toddler-court-program> To learn more about the conference and to register, visit SCIMHA's website at: <https://scimha.org/page-18157>



Family Connection of South Carolina Conference Offers Opportunity to Learn About More Resources and Support for the Special Needs Community



The Department of Children's Advocacy will be participating Family Connection South Carolina's Hopes and Dreams Conference May 24-27, 2021.

The annual conference offers professionals, family members, and self-advocates the opportunity to learn more about resources and support available to the special needs community.

Family Connection of South Carolina's website shares that the four-day conference is scheduled to be an exciting, all-new virtual format this year. Each day, Family Connection will present four targeted trainings including Early Childhood, Child and Youth, Parenting, with presentations in Spanish. Choose one or more session(s) on the day and time that work best for you, and registration is free! Learn more at this link: <https://www.familyconnectionsc.org/training/conferences/schedule/>.



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Growing a Community Where Children Thrive